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WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted today for the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, which would provide \$6.4 billion in disaster relief for hurricane recovery along the Gulf Coast. The bill passed the House by only one vote. Rep. Melancon had worked with House leadership to include specific funding and waiver language in the supplemental to help expedite the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in south Louisiana.

"People in south Louisiana are tired of waiting for help from their government," Rep. Melancon said.

"For too long, we have put the rebuilding needs of other countries before the needs of our own citizens along the Gulf Coast. This supplemental bill will cut red tape and provide much-needed hurricane relief money for our farmers, shrimpers, schools, colleges and universities, and local governments in south Louisiana, and I am proud to vote for it today."

"I urge my colleagues in the Senate to quickly pass this bill. Because of new budgetary rules in Congress, the opportunity for this much help for hurricane victims will not come again. This is the last train leaving the station, and we need to make sure Louisiana is on it."

"Much has been made of the language in this bill setting benchmarks for the war in the Iraq. This language concerns me and I don't support it, but I don't believe there is anything in this bill that puts our troops in harm's way. However, voting against this bill WILL put the people of south Louisiana in harm's way."

"If we let this one chance for \$1.3 billion in levee-building money pass us by, the Members who vote against it are to blame for leaving the people of south Louisiana like sitting ducks in the face of the next Katrina or Rita. Hurricane season begins in only two months, and we can't wait any longer for levee money. We need comprehensive hurricane protection in south Louisiana, and we need it today."

Among the hurricane recovery needs Rep. Melancon had called for that are included in the supplemental are: funding for additional agriculture and fisheries disaster relief, funding construction of the levee protection system on both the east and west bank in New Orleans and surrounding parishes, money for K-12 teacher recruitment and higher education assistance, the extension of a federal grant program for critically needed social services, and billions in funding for FEMA disaster recovery grants, with no local or state match required. Also included in the supplemental is language forgiving all community disaster loans, an initiative Rep. Melancon has been working on with House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn and other Member of Congress from the Gulf Coast.

Specifically, the Emergency Supplemental includes the following funding priorities for Gulf Coast recovery:

- **\$260 million for agriculture and fisheries disaster assistance** for all 2005 hurricane affected areas. This includes:
 - \$120 million for fisheries relief. A significant portion of this funding will go to Louisiana for direct relief for the shrimp and menhaden industries, surveying, and debris removal along traditional fishing grounds.
 - \$100 million for citrus disaster assistance
 - \$25 million for livestock disaster assistance
 - \$15 million for rice saltwater intrusion disaster assistance

\$1.3 billion for east and west bank levee protection system in New Orleans and surrounding parishes.

\$4.3 billion for FEMA disaster recovery grants. The state and local match for these grants will be waived, meaning the federal government will finance 100% of the grants. FEMA disaster recovery grants are used for vital recovery projects, like repairing sewage and water treatment facilities; rebuilding public buildings like schools, firehouses, and police departments; and hauling away debris from the storm. In Louisiana alone, there are over 23,000 of these public assistance projects to repair and rebuild public buildings and infrastructure.

\$30 million for K-12 education recruitment assistance (similar to Miller-Melancon RENEWAAL Act introduced in early March)

\$30 million for higher education assistance (similar to Miller-Melancon RENEWAAL Act introduced in early March)

Extension of FEMA utility subsidy program for essential parish employees (identical to H.R. 858, which Rep. Melancon introduced in early February). Will extend for one more year FEMA's authority to reimburse parish governments for the cost of paying utility bills for essential government employees still working and living in temporary housing (i.e., FEMA trailers). Devastated parish governments have used this program as an incentive to encourage essential employees, such as law enforcement officers, to stay in the community and continue working for the parish.

Community Disaster Loan forgiveness. (similar to language in the Hurricane Katrina and Rita Federal Match Relief Act of 2007 introduced by Majority Whip Clyburn, Rep. Melancon, and other members of the Gulf Coast delegation in February).

Social Services Block Grant extension. SSBG grants will be available for hurricane-affected areas along the Gulf Coast for an extra year, until September 30, 2008. Rep. Melancon is working to alter the language so that SSBG funding is extended even further - September 30, 2010 - before the final supplemental bill is passed. SSBG funding provides critically needed social services including programs for mental health, child welfare, and the treatment of addictive disorders.

Extension of education waiver (identical to H.R. 1262, which Rep. Melancon introduced in early March). Will extend a federal waiver for one more year - until September 30, 2008 - that gives school districts impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita more flexibility in drawing down and utilizing federal money for recovery efforts. Specifically, the waiver will allow schools to continue to use state money for the 10% local match required by FEMA in order for them to be eligible for the 90% federal reimbursement for recovery projects. The bill will also allow school districts to use federal funds appropriated by Congress in the Defense/Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill (H.R. 2863) to pay for expenses state money would normally be used for, such as teachers' salaries and school operational needs. Last fall, Rep. Melancon was an original co-sponsor of successful legislation that extended the waiver until September 30th, 2007.

\$25 million for Small Business Administration disaster loans.

\$80 million for HUD tenant-based rental assistance.

\$10 million for HUD and FEMA Inspector General offices, to increase scrutiny of hurricane recovery dollars.

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